

Living in Community: 2022-2023 Annual Report



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Messages from our Co-Chairs

Nsneknukwa7. Friends and Relatives. It has been my honour to co-chair our board for the past year and work with you to incorporate the society and pursue the goal of convincing Canadians that their shameful, archaic laws bring harm and trauma and stigma to sex workers, and that fixing those laws would be simple, and that the dignity of all would be raised by that one act. And yet the arguments and resistance to this simple solution are rooted in the exact same fundamentalist beliefs and judgmental systems of oppression that Canadian leaders condemn in other countries. I have been proud to stand beside you all on this worthwhile journey.

I have learned a great deal in my time here with you. I have found some personal peace in understanding my own roots as a child of sex work. And understood better how it affected my mother's life and how colonized society shaped my own attitudes and behaviours toward sex and sex work. Colonization messes up everything. Sex, love, relations, health, the land, the water, the climate. Everything.

The struggle we have joined is both simple and difficult. To us it is as simple as noticing that our friends and relatives need help and so we should help them as best we can, no matter what they do to survive, especially if they are not harming others. The difficulty is rooted in the same paternalistic, misogynistic, colonial belief systems that gave rise to the inquisitions, the voting laws, and the marriage laws of colonized societies. Those eventually changed, so the precedent of change has been proven. All we need now is the magic ingredient to shift public opinion with a critical mass of good humans agreeing with the simplicity of our solutions. Takem Nsneknukwa7. All my relations.



Norm Leech, Co-Chair
Executive Director,
Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House



Messages from our Co-Chairs

It has been an honour to serve as the interim co-chair on LIC's Board of Directors and to have been a part of and witnessed the evolution of LIC into the organization it is today. From incorporating as a society and establishing our inaugural Board of Directors, to developing LIC's Strategic Priorities for 2022 to 2025 and establishing our first Board Committees, we have taken concrete actions to establish LIC as an organization that privileges sex workers' voices in advocacy across what is now referred to as 'British Columbia'. These represent small steps towards the broader goal of eliminating the injustices, stigma, and violence experienced by sex workers, all of which must be achieved by centering sex workers' voices in advocacy and public policy.

Despite the promising advances in the development and growth of LIC, our efforts have highlighted the barriers and hurdles we still need to overcome to advance this critical work. This requires continued collaboration with like-minded partners to address the issues that directly impact the health and well-being of sex workers across BC, including the toxic drug public health emergency, the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, and 2SLGBTQIA+ people, and the ongoing criminalization of sex work, among others. Given LIC's role as an advocacy-based organization, we are uniquely positioned to represent the diversity of voices in our communities, and it is encouraging to think about our role in advocating for justice and equity for all sex workers.

While recognizing the challenges ahead, I am motivated by the Board of Director's and staff's dedication to improving sex workers' safety. I am extremely proud to have served alongside such inspiring, insightful, and knowledgeable colleagues, and I am excited for the change that LIC will continue to inspire as we grow. Once again, thank you to all of those, past and present, who have contributed to helping realize LIC's vision, mission and values, as well as to the new members of LIC's Board of Directors who will continue to support this important and necessary work.



Andreas Pilarinos, Interim Co-Chair

Message from our Executive Director

“Every new beginning comes from some other beginning’s end” – Semisonic, “Closing Time”

Don't worry, there's no closing going on here! But as I reflect on the 2022-2023 year of Living in Community, I am struck by the endings and the beginnings that we're in the middle of. In the past year we have wrapped up multi-year projects – or, we're just about to bring them to a close – and at the same time, we are ready to embark on exciting new journeys.

When we decided to become a provincial non-profit, we began a years-long process of incorporating our organization, transitioning from a Vancouver-based Steering Committee to a province-wide Board of Directors, updating our Mission, Vision, and Values, and converting our model – honed since 2003 – to work within the non-profit structure. The final step was the implementation of three committees to ensure more folks from across the province can help guide and inform our work, which we did last fall.

Now, it's been nearly a year that these committees have been reviewing our current work, giving direction and input on future work, and alerting us to new developments or perspectives that we need to know about. And now that we're getting comfortable in this model, it may be time to add yet another layer to it, as we have been working on registering as a charity!

On the education and training side, it has been a labour of love to work with our staff team on converting our successful Curriculum for Change training into an online format. After more than two years of work, all four courses of this new, interactive, self-directed training are almost ready to launch and to live out in the world.

And as we all continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic, we are so excited to be able to gather in-person at our second provincial conference this October in Vancouver. Our 2019 conference was incredibly impactful as it built and deepened relationships among sex workers and support organizations from across BC and beyond, and we initially hoped to hold another conference in 2021 to continue those important connections. But of course, the world had other ideas! Now, we have finally been putting plans in place to join together safely again.

While some of Living in Community's work has changed or come to a close, these endings make space for new beginnings. Whether it's at our upcoming conference, in a meeting, or maybe virtually through one of our online courses, I hope you'll be part of these new beginnings with us.



Helena Seiferling, Executive Director



Our Vision:

We envision a future where sex workers' rights are respected and where sex workers are free from stigma, violence, discrimination, and criminalization. We envision a world where diverse stakeholders can come together to share, learn from each other, and work through different sex work perspectives in order to achieve our common goals of health, safety, and well-being for all community members.

Our Mission:

Centering sex workers' rights, Living in Community convenes diverse stakeholders in order to: understand a range of experiences and perspectives; inform sex work-related policies and practices of governments, service providers, and community organizations; and provide education to support these goals.

Our Values:

- We ensure that the diversity of sex workers' experiences and perspectives are at the centre of our work and inform every aspect of what we do.
- We believe that everyone has the right to health and safety, regardless of their social location and lived experience. However, we recognize that, due to differing levels of power and privilege in society, individuals experience inequitable access to health, safety, justice, and other services and supports. We address the systemic root causes which include colonization, criminalization, racism, discrimination, capitalism, and more.
- We are committed to engaging in ongoing learning about how to truly practice decolonization in our work.
- We use an evidence-based, harm reduction lens on sex work to address the impacts of stigmatization and criminalization of sex workers.
- The foundation of our work is being open to listening and seeking understanding of different perspectives in order to find common ground. We value understanding the perspectives of residents, businesses, and other community stakeholders in regard to the challenges they may have in addressing sex work-related issues.

Our Work in 2022-2023

1. Strengthening and building the capacity of sex worker-serving organizations

One pillar of Living in Community's work is strengthening and building the capacity of sex work support organizations and other key allies across BC to develop mutual learning and a unified voice for sex workers' rights.

Convening and supporting the BC Sex Work Support Service Network is a significant piece of this pillar. The Network is a group of 25 organizations, located across all regions of BC and including one organization in the Yukon, that offer frontline services, supports, and advocacy with and for sex workers in their communities. In the 2022-2023 year, we welcomed new Network members located in Cranbrook and Nelson.

LIC holds quarterly meetings for Network members to give updates on their work, identify shared concerns and best practices, and build a unified voice on advocacy recommendations. We also hold virtual trainings for this group to collectively deepen our knowledge; in 2022-2023, we held trainings on: the nuances of sex workers accessing victim support services, the legal context of sex work in Canada, decolonization in practice at non-profits, and how to engage in advocacy with municipal governments.

And speaking of the municipal level, LIC also convenes the SAFE in Cedar Cottage project in east Vancouver. This group of community members and neighbourhood stakeholders meets regularly to discuss and address sex workers' needs along the Kingsway stroll in the Cedar Cottage area of Vancouver. In the 2022-2023 year, it has been wonderful to see the Kingsway Community Station – a peer-led drop in space for sex workers along the stroll – move into a permanent home to continue providing much-needed services, supports, and community for sex workers in this neighbourhood. SAFE in Cedar Cottage continues to be an important space where folks share ongoing and developing needs for the community and work together on solving local problems.

This coming year, LIC will hold our second provincial conference in October 2023 in Vancouver. This will be an important chance for the folks we work with across the province, and other allies and supporters, to come together and collectively identify what's next for the sex worker rights movement in BC and beyond.

By the Numbers:

- 11: number of stakeholders who actively participated in SAFE in Cedar Cottage meetings throughout the year
- 25: number of member organizations of the BC Sex Work Support Service Network
- 7: number of BC Sex Work Support Service Network meetings and training opportunities held

2. Deepening and broadening our education and training work

LIC's anti-stigma education and awareness-raising is the second key pillar of our work. Since 2013, LIC has been delivering Curriculum for Change, our training for individuals who provide services to sex workers or whose work duties or life circumstances bring them into connection with sex workers. In the 2022-2023 year, LIC provided or facilitated training to 176 learners in British Columbia and the Yukon. Learners included law students, municipal City Councillors, and frontline staff and peers at sex work-serving organizations.

If you've been following LIC's work for awhile, that number of learners may seem lower than in past years. That's because it is – because we've been busy finalizing the online version of our training! LIC staff have been hard at work converting our impactful training into a self-directed online format that will be more flexible and accessible for more stakeholders. We are deeply grateful to the many folks who have tested versions of the online training over the past year and given us invaluable feedback on the content, structure, and learning experience.

The online version of Curriculum for Change will enable anyone to simply register for the training and complete it in their own home and at their own pace, and it will have four distinct courses to meet the needs of different learners. [Sign up to our e-newsletter](#) and follow us on social media to be the first to hear when the online training is live!

In 2022-2023, LIC reached more people than ever through social media. We use our social media to share information about our work, such as by recording short videos about our policy positions, creating infographics about the results of consultations or projects, and breaking down government actions and reports in more accessible language. Our most engaged social media account is Facebook, where we reached 4,292 people throughout the fiscal year.

By the Numbers:

- 176: number of individuals who attended a Living in Community training or educational session in 2022-2023
- 390: average visits to our website per month
- 82: average visits to the 'Find a Service' page of our website – which shows where sex workers and others can find local resources in their community – per month
- 28: average downloads of resources from our website per month
- 4292: people we reached via Facebook in 2022-2023

3. Supporting law and policy change to uphold the rights of sex workers

By the Numbers:

- 47: number of meetings LIC attended with community groups, coalitions, unions, and other allied stakeholders on shared advocacy objectives
- 14: number of municipal, provincial, and federal government consultations and topics for which LIC provided written and verbal submissions
- 13: number of municipal, provincial and federal elected officials whom LIC met with to advocate on sex workers' rights, health, and safety

The third pillar of LIC's work is recommending new laws and policies, and advocating for changes in existing harmful laws and policies, to protect the health, safety and rights of sex workers. The 2022-2023 year brought several opportunities for LIC to participate in government consultations and build collective power toward future policy change.

At the municipal level, LIC spearheaded a campaign to local government elected officials informing them about the importance of evidence-based approaches to support victims of trafficking while upholding sex workers' rights. We also joined the City of New Westminster's Working Group to inform their development of a sex worker safety plan.

Provincially, LIC submitted recommendations for the government's 2023 budget, and also joined the Parliamentary Secretary for Gender Equity's Advisory Committee to inform its forthcoming Gender Based Violence Action Plan. We further met with several provincial Ministers and key senior staff to speak to why sex workers' needs must be taken into account on topics ranging from labour and employment standards to public safety to mental health and addictions. And finally, we closed out the year with a submission to the Province's consultation on their poverty reduction strategy.

We also continue to support and guide the BC Bad Date and Aggressor Reporting Project as a member of its Working Group. After the Working Group and project staff took time to lay a strong foundation, it has been exciting to see the project's activities get fully underway this past year with extensive consultations, research, and mapping of technological options for the BDAR tool. The coming year will be a big one for BC BDAR!



BC BDAR
BC Bad Date & Aggressor
Reporting Project

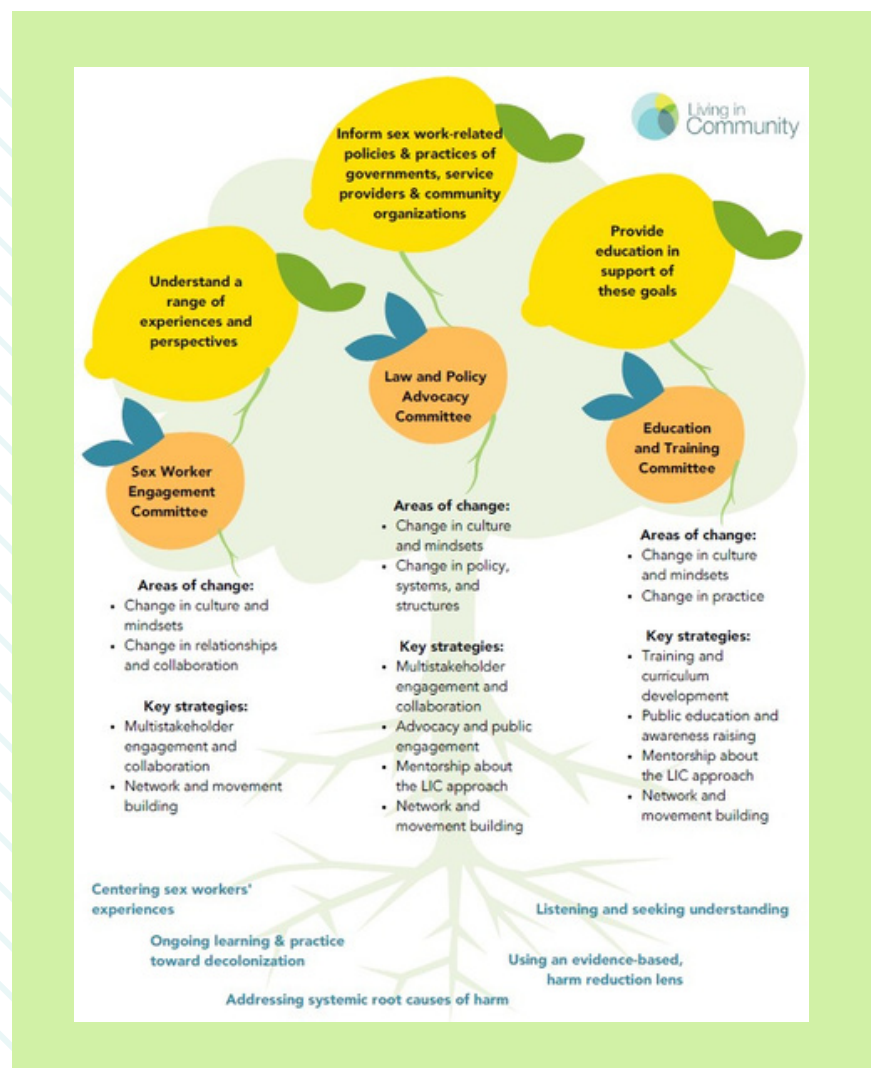
4. Strengthening our internal capacity

The fourth pillar of our work is focused on our internal capacity. 2022-2023 was our second year of operating with a Board of Directors guiding our work, and we continued to learn and grow into this new model.

Excitingly, we implemented three committees to help guide our work: a Sex Worker Engagement Committee, a Law and Policy Advocacy Committee, and an Education and Training Committee. Our Board members each sit on at least one committee, and many passionate and knowledgeable individuals have also joined to ensure our work is as representative, thoughtful, and impactful as it can be. Each of our three staff members also sits on a committee, meaning the discussions and the work is always brought back to both the board and the staff to ensure our approach is integrated and comprehensive.

In 2022-2023, we also began the process of registering as a charitable organization. While this will bring additional administrative and compliance work, we hope to become a charity such that we can expand our reach and our financial options, and hopefully have even more impact through our work.

In the past year, we also created and finalized a Basis of Unity to outline how each of us as individuals comes together to do this work. And finally, we closed out three years of work with a Developmental Evaluation coach who helped us implement good systems to track, measure, and understand the impact and the meaning of our work moving forward.



[See our full Basis of Unity on our website here,](#)

Thank you to our Board of Directors in 2022-2023:

- Norm Leech, Co-Chair
- Andreas Pilarinos, Interim Co-Chair
- Karen-Angela Corbet, Secretary
- Spencer Johnston, Treasurer
- Chelsey Perry, Member at Large
- Heather Paddison, Member at Large
- Jenny Zhang, Member at Large
- Rhian Oldale, Member at Large
- Steph Sia, Member at Large
- Mebrat Beyene, former Co-Chair

Thank you to our staff in 2022-2023:

- Alison Clancey, Community Developer and Training Lead
- Kerry Porth, Community Developer
- Halena Seiferling, Executive Director

Living in Community thanks the following funders for their generous support of our work in 2022-2023:

City of Vancouver
Government of British Columbia
Government of Canada
Law Foundation of British Columbia
McConnell Foundation – Innoweave
Vancouver Foundation

2022-2023 Financial Statement

Living in Community Society

Revenue and Expenses

April 1st 2022 - March 31st 2023

	Total
REVENUE	
Government Grants Earned	\$70,000
Foundation Grants Earned	\$167,640
Donations & Sponsorship	\$9,050
Training Revenue	\$15,900
Total Revenue	\$262,590
EXPENSES	
Personnel Total	\$192,587
Employees	\$148,229
Contracted Services	\$37,478
Honoraria	\$6,880
Administrative Fees	\$5,000
Program Expenses	\$37,650
Total Expenses	\$235,237
Deferred Revenue	\$27,353

Note: LIC's fiscal year (April 1 - March 31) does not align with most project timelines. Deferred revenue represents funding dedicated to projects occurring in or continuing into the next fiscal year.



